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FBI releases first Rosenberg papers

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Smith College historian Friday combed through 725 pages of secret FBI files on the Rosenberg investigation, the first documents the FBI has released from the famous espionage case a quarter-century ago.

The FBI turned over the first installment from the 48,000 page files to Smith College history Prof. Allen Weinstein on Thursday, about three years after he first petitioned for the

records.

The documents also were being delivered to Robert and Michael Meeropol, the sons of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg who were convicted of slipping atomic bomb secrets to Soviet agents and executed in 1953. The Meeropols, who use the name of their adoptive parents, and Weinstein had filed separate lawsuits under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain the documents.

Weinstein called the release of the first batch "an encouraging first step forward, and I hope it foreshadows the imminent release of all the papers."

The FBI also gave Weinstein 350 more pages from its files on another Red Scare Era spying case, the investigation of Alger Hiss, who was convicted of lying to a grand jury when he denied slipping secret State Department documents to confessed spy Whittaker Chambers.

The Rosenberg papers include FBI reports on interviews with Rosenberg and his brother-in-law and principal accuser, David Greenglass. It was Greenglass who admitted spying for Soviet agents while employed as a technician on the Los Alamos, N.M., project to develop the atomic bomb.

According to the documents, Greenglass told the FBI on June 16, 1950, that Rosenberg once arranged for him to meet a man who questioned him about the atomic bomb project.

The meeting took place in New York, while Greenglass was on furlough from Los Alamos. Greenglass said he drove to the meeting site where Rosenberg and the other man, whose name he did not recall, approached him.

"The man got into the car and I drove

on while the man asked me questions about a high-explosive lens which was being experimented with at the Los Alamos bomb project," said the Greenglass statement. "I tried to describe the lens to the man while I was driving."

The day after the Greenglass interview, FBI agents questioned Rosenberg who "denied any espionage activities and refused to sign a waiver" allowing his apartment to be searched, the documents said.

Rosenberg acknowledged that Ruth Greenglass told him about August 1944 that her husband "was assigned to a secret project at Los Alamos," the memo continued.

But he denied "arranging details of David Greenglass contacts by Soviets and denies receiving any confidential information relating to the Los Alamos secret project," the FBI summary said.

Weinstein said Friday that the material suggests that Greenglass' statements to the FBI were consistent with his trial testimony.

The professor said, however, that Greenglass implicated Rosenberg in the spying activities far more seriously than Mrs. Rosenberg.